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CBC Newsletter

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 51 October 2005 Number 5

Virginia [Beach] is for [Bird] Lovers

By Bob Wood

People told Columbus that he would fall off the edge of the Earth if he were to sail west into the unknown. Often we fail to appreciate the qualities of areas just beyond our own on self-imposed artificial boundaries. Join us in Virginia Beach for the first of a series of seasonal meetings birding on the edge.

In January we're gong where we've never held a seasonal meeting — Virginia Beach and the lower Delmarva Peninsula. Though closer for some of us than the Outer Banks, Virginia Beach has an altogether different feel about it and a lot of birds that some of us don't get to see that often.

Highlights will be the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Back Bay NWR, Great Dismal Swamp NWR, Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, Seashore State Park, Kiptopeake State Park, Lotus Garden Parks, False Cape State Park, Princess Anne WMA, pelagic trips with Brian Patteson, and a possible visit to the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum. Filmmakers Michael Male and Judy Fieth, from Blue Earth Films, and pelagic expert, Brian Patteson, will be our speakers.

Due to security concerns, birding on the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel is now possible only if you pay an additional fee. The frequently spectacular birding on the tunnel islands makes it worth the effort, so by all means take advantage of this unusual opportunity. Just be sure to register early because space will be limited. Watch the newsletter for details.

Headquarters will be the Ramada Plaza Resort (1-800-365-3032, www.ramadaplazabeach.com). Oceanfront rooms are $68 and regular rooms are $60; both have a mini refrigerator and microwave. Our new friends in the Virginia Beach Audubon Society will show us all the hot spots, and new Executive Committee members John Ennis and Kim Horstman will be our CBC coordinators. It's not as far as you might think: 3½ hours from Raleigh, 6 hours from Charlotte, 6½ hours from Columbia, and 7 hours from Asheville and Charleston. Heck, it took Columbus over two months to get where he was going!

Mark your calendars now for **January 27 – 29, 2006**. Also, watch http://birdingonthe.net/mailinglists/VABD.html to follow the birds they're seeing up there.

Mark your calendars for these upcoming CBC meetings!

Asheville, NC April 28-30, 2006

Savannah, GA Fall 2006

Touched

By David M. Osborn

Today the day dawned clear and cold
The sky a blue delight,
My feeders near were stacked with gold:
The finches, crisp and bright.

I sauntered by to fill the ports:
The finches flew away.
But one - a pert and fearless sort-
Was quite content to stay.

Yet nearer still, his eye so black
Returned a trusting feel-
I reached and stroked his velvet back
Three times. It felt unreal.

Although I never spoke a word-
No need to, don't you see?
Today I touched a wild, free bird
And it, in turn, touched me.

Nicole White Kennedy

CBC Supports NC Birding Trail

The Carolina Bird Club board has formally voted to support the North Carolina Birding Trail initiative (NCBT). A letter from CBC President Stephen Harris to the NCBT Steering Committee states: "We (CBC) support the core mission of the NCBT, to conserve and enhance North Carolina's bird habitat by promoting sustainable bird watching activities, economic opportunities, and conservation education. We recognize the value that this initiative will bring to North Carolina by demonstrating the economic worth of our natural resources through nature-based tourism. We view the combination of increased recreation, economic development, and conservation education opportunities as a win-win situation for the state."

Request Revision of the CBC By-laws

The CBC board requests a revision of the By-laws and announces a vote at the Charleston meeting. By-Laws of Article II Number 1 which now read, "Memberships are on a calendar year basis (1 January through 31 December)." The requested revised version of By-Laws Article II Number 1 to read, "Memberships are on an annual basis."

Liability Release Statement

Please note the change in the registration form with the signing of a liability release. This will now be included with each meeting and bonus field trip registration.

New Members

Nancy D. Alguire
Rocky Point, NC

William and Jean Bohs
Durham, NC

Frank Clayton
Brasstown, NC

Bob & Karen Cole
Brevard, NC

George and Mary Anne Cromartie
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Stacy & Mike Erb
Salisbury, NC

Frank Defeo
Little River, SC

Jesse & Claudia Fagan
Charleston, SC

Doug Johnston
Leicester, NC

Sue Kenney
Raleigh, NC

Wendy McKnight
Fayetteville, NC

Daiki and Yumi Naruke
Columbia, SC

Michelle Pate
Charleston, SC

Michelle Pate
Charleston, SC

Harry & Sandra Shoffner
Mebane, NC

Louis E. Skrabec
Greensboro, NC

Vernon Smith
Lincolnton, NC

Connie Ward
Stan Wulkowicz
Maggie Valley, NC

Deceased Members

Dr. E. L. Shuler
Clemson, SC

Editor's note: The poem below is from former CBC Board member Lynn Barber, who is working on a Big Year list in Texas. Some of you may have seen this poem in ABA's "Winging It", Vol. 17, no 4, July/August 2005 issue. As of September 1 Lynn had seen 501 species of birds in Texas! I often use Lynn's bird illustrations in this newsletter (her illustration of binoculars is on the back cover). Check out Lynn's website to follow her progress at www.lynnbarber.com.

Texas, End of May *By Lynn Barber*

The problem with driving across this broad state
is that it gives me time to contemplate
the idiocy of the five months past—
and seven more!—I hope I last.

With each bird reported not yet on my list,
I must hop in my car—it can't be missed!
The miles fly by, as do the birds.
It really is too nuts for words.

Yet there's an odd pleasure as the total rises,
filled with wondrous, bizarre surprises,
with "easy" birds that can't be found,
but "rarities" that much abound.

No one could've predicted what's happened to date,
nor what will be my "big year's" fate.
Let's hope it's not what happened to my car,
which died from being driven too far.

I hope that birds keep being spotted,
that t's are crossed and i's are dotted,
that migrants are manifest and days are long,
that snows are early and fronts are strong.

That I hold out and my new car does, too,
and that finds are many and misses are few
as I roam the state both far and near,
and that there's time to sleep in the coming year!

Christmas Bird Count Input Needed by October 20

As usual, the December issue of the *CBC Newsletter* will include a list of Christmas Bird Counts in the Carolinas. Compilers please send your count information (loeation, date, compiler name, phone number, and email) by October 20 to: Karen Bearden, 1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612 or chickadeebirders@earthlink.net.

Feathered Features

Wings Over Water November 1-6. Join birders from the Carolinas and around the U.S. in North Carolina's beautiful Outer Banks. There will be birding, paddling, and natural history trips to choose from. CBC is a sponsor of the event again this year and many of our members help lead trips. New this year is an after-hours coffee house on Friday and Saturday nights at the Junkanoo Island Café Waterfront Coffee House, where birders and nature lovers can join together to swap stories. There will also be a Federal Duck Stamp exhibit at the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center with entries from the 2005 contest. For more information and a copy of the schedule of events call 252-441-8144 or visit their website at www.wingsoverwater.org.

Project FeederWatch. It's that time of year again to join Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch. Count birds at your feeder from November through March. Cost is $15 ($12 for Lab members). For more information call 607-254-2427 or visit www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw.

NC Partners In Flight (PIF) October 19. Join the joint meeting of NC PIF and NC Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) on Wednesday, Oct. 19, 12:45 p.m. at Goose Creek State Park near Washington, North Carolina. The theme of the meeting will be *Conservation on Industrial Forestland.* Program speakers include: Curtis Dykstra, Park Ranger, Goose Creek State Park; Kevin O'Kane, Weyerhaeuser Company; Mark Danaher, International Paper; Jeff Hall, Weyerhaeuser Cool Springs Environmental Education Center; Mark Johns, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Sarah Cross, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Jeremy Poirier, International Paper Company; and John Gerwin, NC Museum of Natural Sciences. For more information contact Mark Johns at P.O. Box 564, Cary, NC 27512; johsme@mindpsring.com; or visit the website at www.faculty.ncwc.edu/mbrooks/pif/index.html.

Just Outside the Window

Tupelos in October Mid-October is one of my favorite times of the year. The weather can be lovely in mid-October—golden sunshine pouring from a soft blue sky, lower humidity and pleasant cool snaps (finally!) that linger, sometimes overlapping each other. And mid-October is never too late to still hope for a nice migrant, even though the main hustle-and-bustle of songbird migration is through the Carolinas by then.

It was just such a lovely mid-October day, golden light dripping like dew from the mostly still-green deciduous leaves, early in the afternoon when Mac noticed a bird back in the trees around the feeder. He couldn't identify the bird so he called me over to look out the side window. I found the bird, recognized "thrush" immediately, but beyond that my brain reeled. It wasn't a Swainson's Thrush; it wasn't a Veery; it wasn't a Hermit Thrush. That left only two possibilities—Gray-cheeked Thrush and Bicknell's Thrush. Going on size and the long-winged look of this bird, I finally said, after a few minutes of silence, "[Expletive deleted], that's a Gray-cheeked Thrush!" I was so surprised that I sat down at the dining room table and just watched this visitor from a place far north and west of us, like maybe western Siberia, fluttering around in the trees in the backyard for a few minutes.

As I watched the Gray-cheeked was joined by a Swainson's and another Gray-cheek. And there, on the ground flipping leaves much like a Waterthrush and digging through leaf litter like a Robin, was a different thrush—smaller, a slightly different gray-brown, short-winged, big-eyed. I watched that bird for some time without assigning it a name.

As I sat a phenomenon I had never experienced unfolded in front of my eyes. The birds were concentrated in a small area and feeding voraciously in two trees of the same species— Black Tupelos. Apparently, the fruit of the tupelo trees was at some perfect stage of ripeness for the birds and that was drawing them in. I was watching the avian version of a "feeding frenzy". At one point, I had three thrushes in one binocular field of view—a Swainson's, a Gray-cheeked and a Wood Thrush. Along with the numerous thrushes were other migrants and residents. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak flew in from time to time to nab some of the tupelo berries and even the resident Pileated Woodpeckers clung, upside-down, on the tiny twigs to get to the tupelo berries. The season's first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker showed up for the tupelo feast. The different thrush reappeared several times, on the ground, searching for wind fallen fruit and the inevitable invertebrates in the moist duff around the tupelo trees, perching once or twice within a foot of the ground in some of the tangle of understory vegetation there. I still hesitated on an identification for the bird.

It was a Saturday and I had housework and computer work to do. But I sat at the dining room table for hours, until almost sunset. One does not wash dishes or type when a phenomenon like this is oceurring in your backyard.

The phenomenon continued on Sunday and I spent a great deal of Sunday where I had spent Saturday afternoon, at the dining room table, making notes on thrushes. I finally had the confidence, after seeing numerous Gray-cheeked Thrushes coming and going in the tupelo trees, to assign the unknown thrush a name—Bicknell's Thrush.

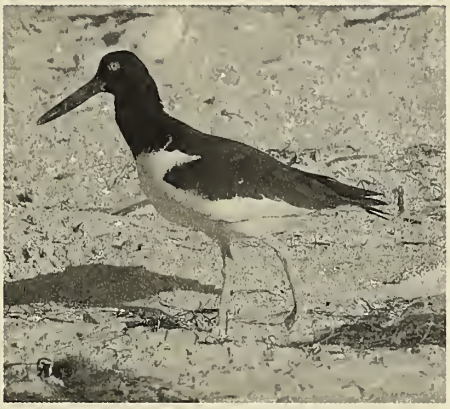
The golden light of October had ripened the berries of a couple of tupelo trees growing in the moisture of a spring in an anonymous patch of scruffy second-growth mixed forest in the Deep South and had graced me with a gift, visitors from the boreal forests of Siberia, Alaska, western Canada and, finally, New England.

Chicks of Cape Hatteras Beach

By Patricia J. Moore

When Neal and I joined the ranks of National Park Service (NPS) volunteers for summer work, little did we know that we would amass 55 hot hours during three month's observation of chicks of American Oystercatchers and Piping Plovers. The NPS plan for monitoring the chicks also included the help of graduate students.

June 12 — Our first assignment was an American Oystercatcher family on the beach opposite Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. The chicks were half-grown, actively moving in the area outside the north edge of their closure (the NPS term used for enclosure.) Although we were given permission to be in a no-drive zone, an observer at the top of the lighthouse called in our transgression. Except for an abrupt visit from a ranger, there was little excitement, because the birds disappeared into dunes where we could not follow them. Our next assignments were more interesting.



American Oystercatcher by Giff Beaton

June 21 — We were instructed to monitor a South Beach closure that was east of ramp 49. Within the closure the wraek line was wide and heavy with dried seaweed. Below it was a wide stretch of smooth sand where there were no tire tracks or footprints. The area was home to two families of American Oystercatchers, one just hatched, the other old enough to move around. The younger family was nearest, about ¼ mile away. It was our first experience with chicks so young.

When we first arrived, the chicks were not visible. We eould see the adults running to the waterline, probing for food, and running back toward the wrack line, so we timed their trips. They were taking food to their chicks every two minutes.

It took us two hours of moving along the closure line, which was perpendicular to the water, before we could see where the adults were going. Two very small, downy chicks were concealed in the seaweed in the wrack line. We watched the activity for two hours; our most interesting records were the two-minute foraging trips.

July 3 — On this holiday weekend we were again asked to monitor the South Beach oystercatcher family. When we came over ramp #49, we were so amazed at the number of visitors that we decided to count vehicles. Within that two-mile stretch between ramp and closure, there were 285 cars and trucks! Few people were fishing; most were simply enjoying a vacation at the beach.

The chicks that were hiding in the sea grass on June 21 were able to practiee foraging. Keeping close to the adults, they would probe for food at the water's edge, but occasionally a parent would feed them. During the four hours of our observations, the family ranged from the water's edge, up through the wrack line, to the upper beach, and back again. If gulls flew overhead when the family was on the unprotected upper beach, the chicks would hide under a parent. It became obvious that oystercatchers need a large area of undisturbed beach for their wide-ranging feeding habits.

We were not asked to observe this family again because the Cape Point Piping Plovers had hatched and required monitoring during July. We did return to the South Beach on August 14 to conduct a Shorebird Survey. We found a family of four oystereatchers. Two that were obviously younger had not only been banded, but had tiny radio transmitters affixed to their legs. The graduate student who was studying them was tracking them with radio telemetry. We like to think this was "our" family from June 21 and July 3.

As for the Piping Plover chicks of July, that is another story.

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Look for information on future 2006 CBC bonus trips in upcoming newsletters to:

Burke's Gardens and Grayson's Highlands—February
Congaree National Monument—May
New River—June
Oregon—late June or early July
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CBC Western Sampler May 20 - 29, 2006

By Stephen Harris and John Ennis

Six countries in six days – well not quite, but six life zones in this sampler of the Western Grasslands, Badlands, and mountains where the eastern and western bird ranges overlap. Our trip begins in Denver, Colorado with arrivals on Saturday, May 20, and ends in Denver Memorial Day, May 29. During eight birding days anticipate about 1300+ miles with stops at Pawnee National Grasslands, Crescent Lake NWR, Badlands National Park, Mt. Rushmore, Black Hills, Devil's Tower, Thunder Basin National Grasslands, Rocky Mountain National Park, and Golden Gate State Park. Many of the likely target species include Mountain Plover; Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks; Prairie Falcon; Lesser Prairie-Chicken; Blue Grouse; Plumbeous Vireo; Black-backed, Three-toed, and Lewis's Woodpeckers; Red-napped and Williamson's Sapsuckers; Cordilleran, Dusky, Olive-sided, and Hammond's Flycatchers; Pinyon and Gray Jays; American Dipper; Black Swift; Northern Pygmy-Owl; Townsend's Solitaire; Rock Wren; Pygmy Nuthatch; MacGillivray's and Virginia's Warblers; Clark's Nutcracker; Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs; Lark and Lazuli Buntings; Brewer's, Cassin's, Lark, and Vesper Sparrows; and Cassin's Finch. Field trip leaders are John Ennis and Stephen Harris. Price from Denver includes lodging, group vehicle, and guide service. Limit 12 people. If you are interested in the trip and registration information please contact Headquarter Secretary Dana Harris at srharris@mindspring.com or 910-791-9034 to reserve your spot. An information and registration packet including pricing details and a more detailed checklist will be mailed to you, so please be sure to include complete name(s) and mailing address.

Warblers and More at Ridge Junction Overlook *By Anne Olson*

Before sun-up on Sunday morning of August 28th, over twenty people met at Ridge Junction Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway to observe southbound migrants. We arrived in time to watch both the sunrise and the early morning activity of the birds. The weather started out clear and not too chilly. The overlook managed to escape the fog that frequents the area. Instead we were treated to lots of sun and warm temperatures.

Some birds were reluctant to move until the sun had warmed them up a bit. One lone goldfinch sat in the top of a spruce tree for over ten minutes soaking up the sun's rays before he flew off. Just after 7 am a small flock of Cedar Waxwings flew overhead. They were completely silent. Several birders commented that they had never seen a flock of silent Cedar Waxwings before. Perhaps they were just too chilly to make any noise.

As soon as it was light enough to see, we started seeing warblers. Early warbler sightings included Blackburnian, a Tennessee, several Cape Mays, and a Black-and-White. It was often hard to identify which warblers we were seeing as they dashed about, even fussing at each other. Someone commented that one would think they would save their energy for the long trip ahead.

Occasionally we were treated to a warbler sitting still long enough to make a positive ID. One spectacular view was of a Blackburnian Warbler who still had quite a bit of his summer coloration. He posed on the end of a branch for several minutes. Those who saw him had a good opportunity study his markings and compare them with those of other warblers. The fourteen different species of warblers provided a good opportunity to study fall plumage. For some of us it was the first opportunity to see warblers in the fall.

Lynn Barber

In addition to warblers we saw a lovely female Indigo Bunting, a Winter Wren, and, near the end of the morning, an immature Bald Eagle. Throughout out the morning there were spurts of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds zooming through heading south.

The complete list of the 41 species for the morning was: Turkey Vulture; Bald Eagle (immature); Broad-winged Hawk; Chimney Swift; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Downy Woodpecker; Eastern Wood-Pewee; Empidonax sp.; Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos; Common Raven; Barn Swallow; Red-breasted Nuthatch; Winter Wren; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; Wood Thrush; Gray Catbird; Cedar Waxwing; Blue-winged, Tennessee, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Yellow-throated, Black-and-white, Worm-eating, and Canada Warblers; American Redstart; Scarlet Tanager; Eastern Towhee; Dark-eyed Junco; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Indigo Bunting; Baltimore Oriole; Pine Siskin; and American Goldfinch. Thank you, Lori, for organizing a great trip.

Bonus Trip to South Carolina's Huntington Beach State Park

By Jack Peachy

Among the several top notch birding locations in South Carolina is Huntington Beach State Park (HBSP). Join us on a field trip at this famous birding spot on **November 19**. HBSP has a varied habitat of salt marsh, freshwater lagoons, sandy beach, dunes, maritime shrub thicket, forest, and the jetty with its "Patagonia Picnic Table Effect."

We'll meet at 7:30 am at the north parking lot, close to the restrooms. At the jetty we will look for Great Cormorant and Purple Sandpiper. The beach and jetty pond may have winter-plumaged shorebirds. Beyond the tern nesting area we can find terns and maybe a tough-to-find gull. A scan of the salt marsh will allow a look at the maritime sparrows. A walk back to the parking lot behind the secondary dunes gives us a chance at Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, and other raptors, and perhaps a Lapland Longspur.

The freshwater ponds should have some dabbling ducks and maybe some bay ducks such Canvasback and both scaup. A walk along the carriage path and the old entrance road will produce the usual passerines, winter sparrows, and maybe a late migrant warbler. The trip will end about 1 pm, so bring lunch and drinks. Leader for this trip is Jack Peachey, local birder and long time CBC member. Cost is $10 per person and is limited to 12 participants.

Be prepared for possible cold and breezy weather, and bring raingear and comfortable shoes that might get a tad damp depending on how far out one would like to get into the tidal salt marsh looking for the sparrows. From the jetty to the north parking lot is about 3 miles, plus, another 1.5 miles along the carriage path. The causeway has a cover where birders are able to sit and watch the birds! There are many accommodations to choose from in the Litchfield Beach area.

Please register with Jack at 843-347-5810 or ppaw @sccoast.net before mailing your registration money or for more information.

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Carolina Bird Club Registration Form

Huntington Beach State Park Bonus Field Trip

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening phone _____ Email _____

_____Update my membership record with this address information.

Registration for the Huntington Beach State Park bonus trip costs $10/pp paid in advance.

Enclosed is my check for $_____ for _____ member(s) to join the **Huntington Beach State Park, SC November 19 trip**.

Club policy requires all field trip participants to comply with the field trip leader's assessment and requests concerning the physical ability of each participant to make or complete the trip.

I release and discharge (and will not make a claim against) Carolina Bird Club for injury, death, or property damage arising from my participation at this meeting and Club field trips. This release of liability is entered into on behalf of all members of my family, including all minors accompanying me. I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of any such minors and that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature _____ Date _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to: CBC, 5009 Crown Point Lane, Wilmington, NC 28409.

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Upcoming CBC Bonus Trips

Huntington Beach SP, SC, November 19, 2005
CBC Western Sampler, May 20-29, 2006

20013/7012

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Rare Bird Alert: 704-332-BIRD
CBC Website: www.carolinabirdclub.org

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